No. 4 [Price 1s.

VANITY FAIR:

PEN AND PENCIL SKETCHES OF ENGLISH SOCIETY.

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LONDON:
PUBLISHED AT THE PUNCH OFFICE, 85, FLEET STREET.
J. MENZIES, EDINBURGH; J. M'LEOD, GLASGOW; J. M'GLASHAN, DUBLIN.

[Bradbury & Evans, Printers, Whitefriars.]

Lieutenant Biborne and his ardent love letters.

Mr Osborne's welcome to Amelia

CHAPTER XII.

QUITE A SENTIMENTAL CHAPTER.

WE must now take leave of Arcadia, and those amiable people practising the rural virtues there, and travel back to London, to inquire what has become of Miss Amelia.

"We don't care a fig for her," writes some unknown correspondent with a pretty little hand-writing and a pink seal to her note. "She is *fade* and insipid," and adds some more kind remarks in this strain, which I should never have repeated at all, but that they are in truth prodigiously complimentary to the young lady whom they concern.

Has the beloved reader, in his experience of society, never heard similar remarks by good-natured female friends; who always wonder what you *can* see in Miss Smith that is so fascinating; or what *could* induce Major Jones to propose for that silly insignificant simpering Miss Thompson, who has nothing but her wax-doll face to recommend her? What is there in a pair of pink cheeks and blue eyes forsooth? these dear Moralists ask, and hint wisely that the gifts of genius, the accomplishments of the mind, the mastery of Mangnall's questions, and a ladylike knowledge of botany and geology, the gift of making poetry, the power of rattling sonatas in the Herz-manner, and so forth, are far more valuable endowments for a female, than those fugitive charms which a few years will inevitably tarnish. It is quite edifying to hear women speculate upon the worthlessness and the duration of beauty.

But though virtue is a much finer thing, and those hapless creatures who suffer under the misfortune of good looks ought to be continually put in mind of the fate which awaits them; and though, very likely, the heroic female character which ladies admire is a more glorious and beautiful object than the kind, fresh, smiling, artless, tender little domestic goddess, whom men are inclined to worship—yet the latter and inferior sort of women must have this consolation—that the men *do* admire them after all; and that, in spite of all our kind friends' warnings and protests, we go on in our desperate error and folly, and shall to the end of the chapter. Indeed, for my own part, though I have been repeatedly told by persons for whom I have the greatest respect, that Miss Brown is an insignificant chit, and Mrs. White has nothing but her *petit minois chiffonné*, and Mrs.

Black has not a word to say for herself; yet I know that I have had the most delightful conversations with Mrs. Black (of course, my dear Madam, they are inviolable): I see all the men in a cluster round Mrs. White's chair: all the young fellows battling to dance with Miss Brown: and so I am tempted to think that to be despised by her sex is a very great compliment to a woman.

The young ladies in Amelia's society did this for her very satisfactorily. For instance, there was scarcely any point upon which the Miss Osbornes, George's sisters, and the Mesdemoiselles Dobbin agreed so well as in their estimate of her very trifling merits: and their wonder that their brothers could find any charms in her. "We are kind to her," the Misses Osborne said, a pair of fine black-browed young ladies who had had the best of governesses, masters, and milliners; and they treated her with such extreme kindness and condescension, and patronised her so insufferably, that the poor little thing *was* in fact perfectly dumb in their presence, and to all outward appearance as stupid as they thought her. She made efforts to like them, as in duty bound, and as sisters of her future husband. She passed "long mornings" with them—the most dreary and serious of forenoons. She drove out solemnly in their great family coach with them, and Miss Wirt their governess, that raw-boned Vestal. They took her to the ancient concerts by way of a treat, and to the oratorio, and to St. Paul's to see the charity children, where, in such terror was she of her friends, she almost did not dare be affected by the hymn the children sang. Their house was comfortable; their papa's table rich and handsome; their society solemn and genteel; their self-respect prodigious; they had the best pew at the Foundling; all their habits were pompous and orderly, and all their amusements intolerably dull and decorous. After every one of her visits (and O how glad she was when they were over!) Miss Osborne and Miss Maria Osborne, and Miss Wirt, the vestal governess, asked each other with increased wonder, "What *could* George find in that creature?"

How is this? some carping reader exclaims. How is it that Amelia, who had such a number of friends at school, and was so beloved there, comes out into the world and is spurned by her discriminating sex? My dear Sir, there were no men at Miss Pinkerton's establishment except the old dancing-master; and you would not have had the girls fall out about *him?* When George, their handsome brother, ran off directly after breakfast, and dined from home half-a-dozen times a-week; no wonder the neglected sisters felt a little vexation. When young Bullock (of the firm of Hulker, Bullock and Co., Bankers, Lombard Street) who had been making up to Miss Maria the last two seasons, actually asked Amelia to dance the cotillon, could you expect that the former young lady should be pleased? And yet she said she was, like an artless forgiving creature. "I 'm so delighted you like dear Amelia," she said quite eagerly to Mr. Bullock after the dance. "She's engaged to my brother George; there 's not much in her, but she's the best-natured and most unaffected young creature: at home we're all *so* fond of her." Dear girl! who can calculate the depth of affection expressed in that enthusiastic *so?*

Miss Wirt and these two affectionate young women so earnestly and frequently impressed upon George Osborne's mind the enormity of the

sacrifice he was making, and his romantic generosity in throwing himself away upon Amelia, that I 'm not sure but that he really thought he was one of the most deserving characters in the British army, and gave himself up to be loved with a good deal of easy resignation.

Somehow, although he left home every morning, as was stated, and dined abroad six days in the week, when his sister believed the infatuated youth to be at Miss Sedley's apron-strings: he was *not* always with Amelia, whilst the world supposed him at her feet. Certain it is that on more occasions than one, when Captain Dobbin called to look for his friend, Miss Osborne (who was very attentive to the Captain, and anxious to hear his military stories, and to know about the health of his dear Mamma), Miss Osborne would laughingly point to the opposite side of the square, and say, "Oh, you must go to the Sedley's to ask for George; *we* never see him from morning till night." At which kind of speech the Captain would laugh in rather an absurd constrained manner, and turn off the conversation, like a consummate man of the world, to some topic of general interest, such as the Opera, the Prince's last ball at Carlton House, or the weather—that blessing to society.

"What an innocent it is, that pet of yours," Miss Maria would then say to Miss Jane, upon the Captain's departure. "Did you see how he blushed at the mention of poor George on duty?"

"It 's a pity Frederic Bullock hadn't some of his modesty, Maria," replies the elder sister, with a toss of her head.

"Modesty! Awkwardness you mean, Jane. I don't want Frederic to trample a hole in my muslin frock, as Captain Dobbin did in your's at Mrs. Perkins'."

"In *your* frock, he, he! How could he? Wasn't he dancing with Amelia?"

The fact is, when Captain Dobbin blushed so, and looked so awkward, he remembered a circumstance of which he did not think it was necessary to inform the young ladies, viz. that he had been calling at Mr. Sedley's house already, on the pretence of seeing George, of course, and George wasn't there, only poor little Amelia, with rather a sad wistful face, seated near the drawing-room window, who, after some very trifling stupid talk, ventured to ask, was there any truth in the report that the regiment was soon to be ordered abroad; and had Captain Dobbin seen Mr. Osborne that day?

The regiment was not ordered abroad as yet; and Captain Dobbin had not seen George. "He was with his sister, most likely," the Captain said. "Should he go and fetch the truant?" So she gave him her hand kindly and gratefully: and he crossed the square; and she waited and waited, but George never came.

Poor little tender heart! and so it goes on hoping and beating, and longing and trusting. You see it 's not much of a life to describe. There 's not much of what you call incident in it. Only one feeling all day—when will he come? only one thought to sleep and wake upon. I believe George was playing billiards with Captain Cannon in Swallow Street at the time when Amelia was asking Captain Dobbin about him; for he was a jolly sociable fellow, and excellent in all games of skill.

Once, after three days of absence, Miss Amelia put on her bonnet, and actually invaded the Osborne house. "What! leave our brother to come to us?" said the young ladies. "Have you had a quarrel, Amelia? Do tell us!" No, indeed, there had been no quarrel. "Who could quarrel with him," says she, with her eyes filled with tears. She only came over to— to see her dear friends; they had not met for so long. And this day she was so perfectly stupid and awkward, that the Miss Osbornes and their governess, who stared after her as she went sadly away, wondered more than ever what George could see in poor little Amelia.

Of course they did. How was she to bare that timid little heart for the inspection of those young ladies with their bold black eyes? It was best that it should shrink and hide itself. I know the Miss Osbornes were excellent critics of a Cashmere shawl, or a pink satin slip; and when Miss Turner had her's died purple, and made into a spencer; and when Miss Pickford had her ermine tippet twisted into a muff and trimmings,

I warrant you the changes did not escape the two intelligent young women before mentioned. But there are things, look you, of a finer texture than fur or satin, and all Solomon's glories, and all the wardrobe of the Queen of Sheba;—things whereof the beauty escapes the eyes of many connoisseurs. And there are sweet modest little souls on which you light, fragrant and blooming tenderly in quiet shady places; and there are garden-ornaments, as big as brass warming-pans, that are fit to stare the sun itself out of countenance. Miss Sedley was not of the sun-flower sort; and I say it is out of the rules of all proportion to draw a violet of the size of a double dahlia.

No, indeed; the life of a good young girl who is in the paternal nest as yet, can't have many of those thrilling incidents to which the heroine of romance commonly lays claim. Snares or shot may take off the old birds foraging without—hawks may be abroad, from which they escape or by whom they suffer; but the young ones in the nest have a pretty comfortable unromantic sort of existence in the down and the straw, till it comes to their turn, too, to get on the wing. While Becky Sharp was on her own wing in the country, hopping on all sorts of twigs, and amid a multiplicity of traps, and pecking up her food quite harmless and successful, Amelia lay snug in her home of Russell Square; if she went into the world, it was under the guidance of the elders; nor did it seem that any evil could befal her or that opulent cheery comfortable home in which she was affectionately sheltered. Mamma had her morning duties, and her daily drive, and that delightful round of visits and shopping which forms the amusement, or the profession as you may call it, of the rich London lady. Papa conducted his mysterious operations in the city—a stirring place in those days, when war was raging all over Europe, and empires were being staked; when the "Courier" newspaper had tens of thousands of subscribers; when one day brought you a battle of Vittoria, another a burning of Moscow, or a newsman's horn blowing down Russell Square about dinner-time announced such a fact as—"Battle of Leipsic—six hundred thousand men engaged—total defeat of the French—two hundred thousand killed." Old Sedley once or twice came home with a very grave face; and no wonder, when such news as this was agitating all the hearts and all the Stocks of Europe.

Meanwhile matters went on in Russell Square, Bloomsbury, just as if matters in Europe were not in the least disorganised. The retreat from Leipsic made no difference in the number of meals Mr. Sambo took in the servant's hall; the allies poured into France, and the dinner-bell rang at five o'clock just as usual. I don't think poor Amelia cared anything about Brienne and Montmirail, or was fairly interested in the war until the abdication of the Emperor; when she clapped her hands and said prayers,—oh, how grateful! and flung herself into George Osborne's arms with all her soul, to the astonishment of every body who witnessed *that* ebullition of sentiment. The fact is, peace was declared, Europe was going to be at rest; the Corsican was overthrown, and Lieutenant Osborne's regiment would not be ordered on service. That was the way in which Miss Amelia reasoned. The fate of Europe was Lieutenant George Osborne to her. His dangers being over, she sang to Heaven. He was her Europe:

her emperor: her allied monarchs and august prince regent. He was her sun and moon; and I believe she thought the grand illumination and ball at the Mansion House, given to the sovereigns, were especially in honour of George Osborne.

We have talked of shift, self, and poverty, as those dismal instructors under whom poor Miss Becky Sharp got her education. Now, love was Miss Amelia Sedley's last tutoress, and it was amazing what progress our young lady made under that popular teacher. In the course of fifteen or eighteen months' daily and constant attention to this eminent finishing governess, what a deal of secrets Amelia learned, which Miss Wirt and the black-eyed young ladies over the way, which old Miss Pinkerton of Chiswick herself, had no cognizance of! As, indeed, how should any of those prim and reputable virgins? With Misses P. and W. the tender passion is out of the question: I would not dare to breathe such an idea regarding them. Miss Maria Osborne, it is true, was "attached" to Mr. Frederic Augustus Bullock, of the firm of Hulker, Bullock, & Bullock; but her's was a most respectable attachment, and she would have taken Bullock Senior, just the same, her mind being fixed as that of a well-bred young woman should be,—upon a house in Park Lane, a country house at Wimbledon, a handsome chariot, and two prodigious tall horses and footmen, and a fourth of the annual profits of the eminent firm of Hulker & Bullock, all of which advantages were represented in the person of Frederic Augustus. Had orange blossoms been invented then (those touching emblems of female purity imported by us from France, where people's daughters are universally sold in marriage), Miss Maria, I say, would have assumed the spotless wreath, and stepped into the travelling carriage by the side of gouty, old, bald-headed, bottle-nosed Bullock Senior; and devoted her beautiful existence to his happiness with perfect modesty,—only the old gentleman was married already; so she bestowed her young affections on the junior partner. Sweet, blooming, orange flowers! The other day I saw Miss Trotter (that was), arrayed in them, trip into the travelling carriage at St. George's, Hanover Square, and Lord Methuselah hobbled in after. With what an engaging modesty she pulled down the blinds of the chariot—the dear innocent! There were half the carriages of Vanity Fair at the wedding.

This was not the sort of love that finished Amelia's education; and in the course of a year turned a good young girl into a good young woman—to be a good wife presently, when the happy time should come. This young person (perhaps it was very imprudent in her parents to encourage her, and abet her in such idolatry and silly romantic ideas) loved, with all her heart, the young officer in his Majesty's service with whom we have made a brief acquaintance. She thought about him the very first moment on waking; and his was the very last name mentioned in her prayers. She never had seen a man so beautiful or so clever: such a figure on horseback: such a dancer: such a hero in general. Talk of the Prince's bow! what was it to George's? She had seen Mr. Brummell, whom every body praised so. Compare such a person as that to her George! Not amongst all the beaux at the Opera (and there were beaux in those

days with actual opera hats) was there any one to equal him. He was only good enough to be a fairy prince; and oh, what magnanimity to stoop to such a humble Cinderella! Miss Pinkerton would have tried to check this blind devotion very likely, had she been Amelia's confidante; but not with much success, depend upon it. It is in the nature and instinct of some women. Some are made to scheme, and some to love; and I wish any respected bachelor that reads this may take the sort that best likes him.

While under this overpowering impression, Miss Amelia neglected her twelve dear friends at Chiswick most cruelly, as such selfish people commonly will do. She had but this subject, of course, to think about; and Miss Saltire was too cold for a confidante, and she couldn't bring her mind to tell Miss Swartz, the woolly-haired young heiress from St. Kitt's. She had little Laura Martin home for the holidays; and my belief is, she made a confidante of her, and promised that Laura should come and live with her when she was married, and gave Laura a great deal of information regarding the passion of love, which must have been singularly useful and novel to that little person. Alas, alas! I fear she had not a well-regulated mind.

What were her parents doing, not to keep this little heart from beating so fast? Old Sedley did not seem much to notice matters. He was graver of late, and his City affairs absorbed him. Mrs. Sedley was of so easy and uninquisitive a nature, that she wasn't even jealous. Mr. Jos. was away, being besieged by an Irish widow at Cheltenham. Amelia had the house to herself—ah! too much to herself sometimes—not that she ever doubted; for, to be sure, George must be at the Horse-Guards; and he can't always get leave from Chatham; and he must see his friends and sisters, and mingle in society when in town (he such an ornament to every society!); and when he is with the regiment, he is too tired to write long letters. I know where she kept that packet she had—and can steal in and out of her chamber like Iachimo—like Iachimo? No—that is a bad part. I will only act Moonshine, and peep harmless into the bed where faith and beauty and innocence lie dreaming.

But if Osborne's were short and soldierlike letters, it must be confessed, that were Miss Sedley's letters to Mr. Osborne to be published, we should have to extend this novel to such a multiplicity of volumes as not the most sentimental reader could support; that she not only filled sheets of large paper, but crossed them with the most astonishing perverseness; that she wrote whole pages out of poetry-books without the least pity; that she underlined words and passages with quite a frantic emphasis; and, in fine, gave the usual tokens of her condition. She wasn't a heroine. Her letters *were* full of repetition. She wrote rather doubtful grammar sometimes, and in her verses took all sorts of liberties with the metre. But oh, mesdames, if you are not allowed to touch the heart sometimes in spite of syntax, and are not to be loved until you all know the difference between trimeter and tetrameter, may all Poetry go to the deuce, and every schoolmaster perish miserably!

CHAPTER XIII.

SENTIMENTAL AND OTHERWISE.

I FEAR the gentleman to whom Miss Amelia's letters were addressed was rather an obdurate critic. Such a number of notes followed Lieutenant Osborne about the country, that he became almost ashamed of the jokes of his mess-room companions regarding them, and ordered his servant never to deliver them, except at his private apartment. He was seen lighting his cigar with one, to the horror of Captain Dobbin, who, it is my belief, would have given a bank-note for the document.

For some time George strove to keep the liaison a secret. There *was* a woman in the case, that he admitted. "And not the first either," said Ensign Spooney to Ensign Stubbles. "That Osborne 's a devil of a fellow. There was a judge's daughter at Demerara went almost mad about him; then there was that beautiful quadroon girl, Miss Pye, at St. Vincent's, you know; and since he 's been home, they say he 's a regular Don Giovanni, by Jove."

Stubbles and Spooney thought that to be a "regular Don Giovanni by Jove" was one of the finest qualities a man could possess; and Osborne's reputation was prodigious amongst the young men of the regiment. He was famous in field-sports, famous at a song, famous on parade; free with his money, which was bountifully supplied by his father. His coats were better made than any man's in the regiment, and he had more of them. He was adored by the men. He could drink more than any officer of the whole mess, including old Heavytop, the colonel. He could spar better than Knuckles, the private (who would have been a corporal but for his drunkenness, and who had been in the prize-ring); and was the best batter and bowler, out and out, of the regimental club. He rode his own horse, Greased Lightning, and won the Garrison cup at Quebec races. There were other people besides Amelia who worshipped him. Stubbles and Spooney thought him a sort of Apollo; Dobbin took him to be an Admirable Crichton; and Mrs. Major O'Dowd acknowledged he was an elegant young fellow, and put her in mind of Fitzjurld Fogarty, Lord Castlefogarty's second son.

Well, Stubbles and Spooney and the rest indulged in most romantic conjectures regarding this female correspondence of Osborne's,—opining that

it was a Duchess in London, who was in love with him,—or that it was a General's daughter, who was engaged to somebody else, and madly attached to him,—or that it was a Member of Parliament's lady, who proposed four horses and an elopement,—or that it was some other victim of a passion delightfully exciting, romantic, and disgraceful to all parties, on none of which conjectures would Osborne throw the least light, leaving his young admirers and friends to invent and arrange their whole history.

And the real state of the case would never have been known at all in the regiment but for Captain Dobbin's indiscretion. The Captain was eating his breakfast one day in the mess-room, while Cackle, the assistant-surgeon, and the two above-named worthies were speculating upon Osborne's intrigue —Stubbles holding out that the lady was a Duchess about Queen Charlotte's court, and Cackle vowing she was an opera-singer of the worst reputation. At this idea Dobbin became so moved, that though his mouth was full of egg and bread-and-butter at the time, and though he ought not to have spoken at all, yet he couldn't help blurting out, "Cackle, you 're a thtupid fool. You 're alwayth talking nonthenth and thcandal. Othborne ith not going to run off with a Duchess or ruin a milliner. Miss Sedley is one of the most charming young women that ever lived. He 's been engaged to her ever so long; and the man who calls her names had better not do so in my hearing." With which, turning exceedingly red, Dobbin ceased speaking, and almost choked himself with a cup of tea. The story was over the regiment in half-an-hour; and that very evening Mrs. Major O'Dowd wrote off to her sister Glorvina at O'Dowdstown not to hurry from Dublin,—young Osborne being prematurely engaged already.

She complimented the Lieutenant in an appropriate speech over a glass of whisky-toddy that evening, and he went home perfectly furious to quarrel with Dobbin, (who had declined Mrs. Major O'Dowd's party, and sat in his own room playing the flute, and, I believe, writing poetry in a very melancholy manner)—to quarrel with Dobbin for betraying his secret.

"Who the deuce asked you to talk about my affairs," Osborne shouted indignantly. "Why the devil is all the regiment to know that I am going to be married? Why is that tattling old harridan, Peggy O'Dowd, to make free with my name over her d—d supper-table, and advertise my engagement over the three kingdoms? After all, what right have you to say I *am* engaged, or to meddle in my business at all, Dobbin?"

"It seems to me,"— Captain Dobbin began.

"Seems be hanged, Dobbin," his junior interrupted him. "I am under obligations to you, I know it, a d—d deal too well too; but I won 't be always sermonised by you because you 're five years my senior. I 'm hanged if I 'll stand your airs of superiority and infernal pity and patronage. Pity and patronage! I should like to know in what I 'm your inferior?"

"Are you engaged?" Captain Dobbin interposed.

"What the devil's that to you or any one here if I am?"

"Are you ashamed of it?" Dobbin resumed.

"What right have you to ask me that question, sir? I should like to know," George said.

"Good God, you don't mean to say you want to break off?" asked Dobbin, starting up.

"In other words, you ask me if I 'm a man of honour," said Osborne, fiercely; "is that what you mean? You've adopted such a tone regarding me lately that I 'm —— if I 'll bear it any more."

"What have I done? I've told you you were neglecting a sweet girl, George. I've told you that when you go to town you ought to go to her, and not to the gambling-houses about St. James's."

"You want your money back, I suppose," said George, with a sneer.

"Of course I do—I always did, didn't I?" says Dobbin. "You speak like a generous fellow."

"No, hang it, William, I beg your pardon"—here George interposed in a fit of remorse; "you *have* been my friend in a hundred ways, Heaven knows. You've got me out of a score of scrapes. When Crawley of the Guards won that sum of money of me I should have been done but for you: I know I should. But you shouldn't deal so hardly with me; you shouldn't be always catechizing me. I *am* very fond of Amelia; I adore her, and that sort of thing. Don't look angry. She's faultless; I know she is. But you see there's no fun in winning a thing unless you play for it. Hang it: the regiment's just back from the West Indies, I must have a little fling, and then when I 'm married I 'll reform; I will upon my honour, now. And—I say—Dob—don't be angry with me, and I 'll give you a hundred next month, when I know my father will stand something handsome; and I'll ask Heavytop for leave, and I 'll go to town, and see Amelia to-morrow—there now, will *that* satisfy you?"

"It's impossible to be long angry with you, George," said the good-natured Captain; "and as for the money, old boy, you know if I wanted it you 'd share your last shilling with me."

"That I would, by Jove, Dobbin," George said, with the greatest generosity, though by the way he never had any money to spare.

"Only I wish you had sown those wild oats of yours, George. If you could have seen poor little Miss Emmy's face when she asked me about you the other day, you would have pitched those billiard-balls to the deuce. Go and comfort her, you rascal. Go and write her a long letter. Do something to make her happy; a very little will."

"I believe she's d—d fond of me," the Lieutenant said, with a self-satisfied air; and went off to finish the evening with some jolly fellows in the mess-room.

Amelia meanwhile, in Russell Square, was looking at the moon, which was shining upon that peaceful spot, as well as upon the square of the Chatham barracks, where Lieutenant Osborne was quartered, and thinking to herself how her hero was employed. Perhaps he is visiting the sentries, thought she; perhaps he is bivouacking; perhaps he is attending the couch of a wounded comrade, or studying the art of war up in his own desolate chamber. And her kind thoughts sped away as if they were angels and had wings, and flying down the river to Chatham and Rochester, strove to peep into the barracks where George was.

All things considered, I think it was as well the gates were shut, and the sentry allowed no one to pass; so that the poor little white-robed angel

could not hear the songs those young fellows were roaring over the whiskey-punch.

The day after the little conversation at Chatham barracks, young Osborne, to show that he would be as good as his word, prepared to go to town, thereby incurring Captain Dobbin's applause. "I should have liked to make her a little present," Osborne said to his friend in confidence, "only I am quite out of cash until my father tips up." But Dobbin would not allow this good nature and generosity to be balked, and so accommodated Mr. Osborne with a few pound notes, which the latter took after a little faint scruple.

And I dare say he would have bought something very handsome for Amelia; only, getting off the coach in Fleet Street, he was attracted by a handsome shirt-pin in a jeweller's window, which he could not resist; and having paid for that, had very little money to spare for indulging in any further exercise of kindness. Never mind: you may be sure it was not his presents Amelia wanted. When he came to Russell Square, her face lighted up as if he had been sunshine. The little cares, fears, tears, timid misgivings, sleepless fancies of I don't know how many days and nights, were forgotten, under one moment's influence of that familiar, irresistible

smile. He beamed on her from the drawing-room door—magnificent, with ambrosial whiskers, like a god. Sambo, whose face as he announced Captain Osbin (having conferred a brevet rank on that young officer) blazed with a sympathetic grin, saw the little girl start, and flush, and jump up from her watching-place in the window; and Sambo retreated: and as soon as the door was shut, she went fluttering to Lieutenant George Osborne's heart as if it was the only natural home for her to nestle in. Oh, thou poor panting little soul! The very finest tree in the whole forest, with the straightest stem, and the strongest arms, and the thickest foliage, wherein you choose to build and coo, may be marked, for what you know, and may be down with a crash ere long. What an old, old simile that is, between man and timber!

In the meanwhile, George kissed her very kindly on her forehead and glistening eyes, and was very gracious and good; and she thought his diamond shirt-pin (which she had not known him to wear before) the prettiest ornament ever seen.

The observant reader, who has marked our young Lieutenant's previous behaviour, and has preserved our report of the brief conversation which he has just had with Captain Dobbin, has possibly come to certain conclusions regarding the character of Mr. Osborne. Some cynical Frenchman has said that there are two parties to a love-transaction: the one who loves and the other who condescends to be so treated. Perhaps the love is occasionally on the man's side: perhaps on the lady's. Perhaps some infatuated swain has ere this mistaken insensibility for modesty, dullness for maiden-reserve, mere vacuity for sweet bashfulness, and a goose, in a word, for a swan. Perhaps some beloved female subscriber has arrayed an ass in the splendour and glory of her imagination; admired his dullness as manly simplicity; worshipped his selfishness as manly superiority; treated his stupidity as majestic gravity, and used him as the brilliant fairy Titania did a certain carpenter of Athens. I think I have seen such comedies of errors going on in the world. But this is certain, that Amelia believed her lover to be one of the most gallant and brilliant men in the empire: and it is possible Lieutenant Osborne thought so too.

He was a little wild: how many young men are; and don't girls like a rake better than a milksop? He hadn't sown his wild oats as yet, but he would soon: and quit the army, now that peace was proclaimed; the Corsican monster locked up at Elba; promotion by consequence over; and no chance left for the display of his undoubted military talents and valour: and his allowance, with Amelia's settlement, would enable them to take a snug place in the country somewhere, in a good sporting neighbourhood; and he would hunt a little, and farm a little; and they would be very happy. As for remaining in the army as a married man, that was impossible. Fancy Mrs. George Osborne in lodgings in a country town; or, worse still, in the East or West Indies, with a society of officers, and patronized by Mrs. Major O'Dowd! Amelia died with laughing at Osborne's stories about Mrs. Major O'Dowd. He loved her much too fondly to subject her to that horrid woman and her vulgarities, and the rough treatment of a soldier's wife. He didn't care for himself—not he;

but his dear little girl should take the place in society to which as his wife she was entitled: and to these proposals you may be sure she acceded, as she would to any other from the same author.

Holding this kind of conversation, and building numberless castles in the air (which Amelia adorned with all sorts of flower-gardens, rustic walks, country churches, sunday schools, and the like; while George had his mind's eye directed to the stables, the kennel, and the cellar), this young pair passed away a couple of hours very pleasantly; and as the Lieutenant had only that single day in town, and a great deal of most important business to transact, it was proposed that Miss Emmy should dine with her future sisters-in-law. This invitation was accepted joyfully. He conducted her to his sisters; where he left her talking and prattling in a way that astonished those ladies, who thought that George might make something of her; and then went off to transact his business.

In a word, he went out and ate ices at a pastry-cook's shop in Charing Cross; tried a new coat in Pall Mall; dropped in at the Old Slaughters', and called for Captain Cannon; played eleven games at billiards with the Captain, of which he won eight, and returned to Russell Square half-an-hour late for dinner, but in very good humour.

It was not so with old Mr. Osborne. When that gentleman came from the city, and was welcomed in the drawing-room by his daughters and the elegant Miss Wirt, they saw at once by his face—which was puffy, solemn, and yellow at the best of times—and by the scowl and twitching of his black eye-brows, that the heart within his large white waistcoat was disturbed and uneasy. When Amelia stepped forward to salute him, which she always did with great trembling and timidity, he gave a surly grunt of recognition, and dropped the little hand out of his great hirsute paw without any attempt to hold it there. He looked round gloomily at his eldest daughter; who, comprehending the meaning of his look, which asked unmistakeably, "Why the devil is *she* here?" said at once:—

"George is in town, Papa; and has gone to the Horse Guards, and will be back to dinner."

"O he is, is he? I won't have the dinner kept waiting for *him*, Maria:" with which this worthy man lapsed into his particular chair, and then the utter silence in his genteel, well-furnished drawing-room, was only interrupted by the alarmed ticking of the great French clock.

When that chronometer, which was surmounted by a cheerful brass group of the sacrifice of Iphigenia, tolled five in a heavy cathedral tone, Mr. Osborne pulled the bell at his right hand violently, and the butler rushed up.

"Dinner!" roared Mr. Osborne.

"Mr. George isn't come in, sir," interposed the man.

"Damn Mr. George, sir. Am I master of the house? DINNER!" Mr. Osborne scowled. Amelia trembled. A telegraphic communication of eyes passed between the other three ladies. The obedient bell in the lower regions began ringing the announcement of the meal. The tolling over, the head of the family thrust his hands into the great tail-pockets of

his great blue coat and brass buttons, and without waiting for a further announcement, strode down stairs alone, scowling over his shoulder at the four females.

"What 's the matter now, my dear?" asked one of the other, as they rose and tripped gingerly behind the sire.

"I suppose the funds are falling," whispered Miss Wirt; and so, trembling and in silence, this hushed female company followed their dark leader. They took their places in silence. He growled out a blessing, which sounded as gruffly as a curse. The great silver dish-covers were removed. Amelia trembled in her place, for she was next to the awful Osborne, and alone on her side of the table,—the gap being occasioned by the absence of George.

"Soup?" says Mr. Osborne, clutching the ladle, fixing his eyes on her, in a sepulchral tone; and having helped her and the rest, did not speak for a while.

"Take Miss Sedley's plate away," at last he said. "She can't eat the soup—no more can I. It 's beastly. Take away the soup, Hicks, and to-morrow turn the cook out of the house, Maria."

Having concluded his observations upon the soup, Mr. Osborne made a few curt remarks respecting the fish, also of a savage and satirical tendency, and cursed Billingsgate with an emphasis quite worthy of the place. Then he lapsed into silence, and swallowed sundry glasses of wine, looking more and more terrible, till a brisk knock at the door told of George's arrival, when everybody began to rally.

"He could not come before. General Daguilet had kept him waiting at the Horse Guards. Never mind soup or fish. Give him anything—he didn't care what. Capital mutton—capital everything." His good-humour contrasted with his father's severity; and he rattled on unceasingly during dinner, to the delight of all—of one especially, who need not be mentioned.

As soon as the young ladies had discussed the orange and the glass of wine which formed the ordinary conclusion of the dismal banquets at Mr. Osborne's house, the signal to make sail for the drawing-room was given, and they all arose and departed. Amelia hoped George would soon join them there. She began playing some of his favourite waltzes (then newly imported) at the great carved-legged, leather-cased grand piano in the drawing-room overhead. This little artifice did not bring him. He was deaf to the waltzes; they grew fainter and fainter; the discomfited performer left the huge instrument presently; and though her three friends performed some of the loudest and most brilliant new pieces of their *répertoire*, she did not hear a single note, but sate thinking, and boding evil. Old Osborne's scowl, terrific always, had never before looked so deadly to her. His eyes followed her out of the room, as if she had been guilty of something. When they brought her coffee, she started as though it were a cup of poison which Mr. Hicks, the butler, wished to propose to her. What mystery was there lurking? Oh those women! They nurse and cuddle their presentiments, and make darlings of their ugliest thoughts, as they do of their deformed children.

The gloom on the paternal countenance had also impressed George

Osborne with anxiety. With such eyebrows, and a look so decidedly bilious, how was he to extract that money from the governor, of which George was consumedly in want? He began praising his father's wine. That was generally a successful means of cajoling the old gentleman.

"We never got such Madeira in the West Indies, sir, as yours. Colonel Heavytop took off three bottles of that you sent me down, under his belt the other day."

"Did he?" said the old gentleman. "It stands me in eight shillings a bottle."

"Will you take six guineas a dozen for it, sir?" said George, with a laugh. "There 's one of the greatest men in the kingdom wants some."

"Does he?" growled the senior. "Wish he may get it."

"When General Daguilet was at Chatham, sir, Heavytop gave him a breakfast, and asked me for some of the wine. The General liked it just as well—wanted a pipe for the Commander-in-Chief. He 's his Royal Highness's right-hand man."

"It *is* devilish fine wine," said the Eyebrows, and they looked more good-humoured; and George was going to take advantage of this complacency, and bring the supply question on the mahogany; when the father, relapsing into solemnity, though rather cordial in manner, bade him ring the bell for claret. "And we 'll see if that 's as good as the Madeira, George, to which his Royal Highness is welcome, I 'm sure. And as we are drinking it, I 'll talk to you about a matter of importance."

Amelia heard the claret bell ringing as she sat nervously up-stairs. She thought, somehow, it was a mysterious and presentimental bell. Of the presentiments which some people are always having, *some* surely must come right.

"What I want to know, George," the old gentleman said, after slowly smacking his first bumper. "What I want to know is, how you and—ah—that little thing up-stairs, are carrying on?"

"I think, sir, it 's not hard to see," George said, with a self-satisfied grin. "Pretty clear, sir.—What capital wine!"

"What d' you mean, pretty clear, sir?"

"Why, hang it, sir, don't push me too hard. I 'm a modest man. I—ah—I don't set up to be a lady-killer; but I do own that she 's as devilish fond of me as she can be. Any body can see that with half an eye."

"And you yourself?"

"Why, sir, didn't you order me to marry her, and ain't I a good boy? Havn't our Papas settled it ever so long?"

"A pretty boy, indeed. Havn't I heard of your doings, sir, with Lord Tarquin, Captain Crawley of the Guards, the Honorable Mr. Deuceace and that set. Have a care, sir, have a care."

The old gentleman pronounced these aristocratic names with the greatest gusto. Whenever he met a great man he grovelled before him, and my-lorded him as only a free-born Briton can do. He came home and looked out his history in the Peerage: he introduced his name into his daily conversation; he bragged about his Lordship to his daughters. He fell down prostrate and basked in him as a Neapolitan beggar does in the sun. George was alarmed when he heard the names. He feared his

father might have been informed of certain transactions at play. But the old moralist eased him by saying serenely,

"Well, well, young men will be young men. And the comfort to me is, George, that living in the best society in England, as I hope you do; as I think you do; as my means will allow you to do—"

"Thank you, sir," says George, making his point at once. "One can't live with these great folks for nothing; and my purse, sir, look at it;" and he held up a little token which had been netted by Amelia, and contained the very last of Dobbin's pound notes.

"You shan't want, sir. The British merchant's son shan't want, sir. My guineas are as good as theirs George, my boy; and I dont grudge 'em. Call on Mr. Chopper as you go through the City to-morrow; he'll have something for you. I dont grudge money when I know you're in good society, because I know that good society can never go wrong. There's no pride in me. I was a humbly born man—but you have had advantages. Make a good use of 'em. Mix with the young nobility. There's many of 'em who can't spend a dollar to your guinea, my boy. And as for the pink bonnets (here from under the heavy eyebrows there came a knowing and not very pleasing leer)—why boys will be boys. Only there's one thing I order you to avoid, which, if you do not, I'll cut you off with a shilling, by Jove; and that's gambling, sir."

"Oh, of course, sir," said George.

"But to return to the other business about Amelia: why shouldn't you marry higher than a stockbroker's daughter, George—that's what I want to know?"

"It's a family business, sir," says George, cracking filberts. "You and Mr. Sedley made the match a hundred years ago."

"I don't deny it; but people's positions alter, sir. I don't deny that Sedley made my fortune, or rather put me in the way of acquiring, by my own talents and genius, that proud position, which, I may say, I occupy in the tallow trade and the City of London. I've shown my gratitude to Sedley; and he's tried it of late, sir, as my check-book can show. George! I tell you in confidence I don't like the looks of Mr. Sedley's affairs. My chief clerk, Mr. Chopper, does not like the looks of 'em, and he's an old file, and knows Change as well as any man in London. Hulker and Bullock are looking shy at him. He's been dabbling on his own account I fear. They say the Jeune Amelie was his, which was taken by the Yankee Privateer Molasses. And that's flat,—unless I see Amelia's ten thousand down you don't marry her. I'll have no lame duck's daughter in my family. Pass the wine, sir—or ring for coffee."

With which Mr. Osborne spread out the evening-paper, and George knew from this signal that the colloquy was ended, and that his Papa was about to take a nap.

He hurried up stairs to Amelia in the highest spirits. What was it that made him more attentive to her on that night than he had been for a long time—more eager to amuse her, more tender, more brilliant in talk? Was it that his generous heart warmed to her at the prospect of misfortune; or that the idea of losing the dear little prize made him value it more?

She lived upon the recollections of that happy evening for many days

afterwards, remembering his words; his looks; the song he sang; his attitude, as he leant over her or looked at her from a distance. As it seemed to her, no night ever passed so quickly at Mr. Osborne's house before; and for once this young person was almost provoked to be angry by the premature arrival of Mr. Sambo with her shawl.

George came and took a tender leave of her the next morning: and then hurried off to the City, where he visited Mr. Chopper, his father's head man, and received from that gentleman a document which he exchanged at Hulker and Bullock's for a whole pocket-full of money. As George entered the house, old John Sedley was passing out of the banker's parlour, looking very dismal. But his godson was much too elated to mark the worthy stockbroker's depression, or the dreary eyes which the kind old gentleman cast upon him. Young Bullock did not come grinning out of the parlour with him as had been his wont in former years.

And as the swinging doors of Hulker, Bullock and Co. closed upon Mr. Sedley, Mr. Quill, the cashier (whose benevolent occupation it is to hand out crisp bank-notes from a drawer and dispense sovereigns out of a copper-shovel), winked at Mr. Driver, the clerk at the desk on his right. Mr. Driver winked again.

"No go," Mr. D. whispered.

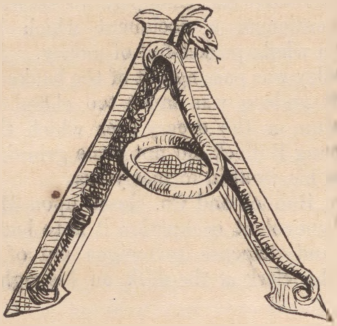
"Not at no price," Mr. Q. said. "Mr. George Osborne, sir, how will you take it?" George crammed eagerly a quantity of notes into his pockets, and paid Dobbin fifty pounds that very evening at mess.

That very evening Amelia wrote him the tenderest of long letters. Her heart was overflowing with tenderness, but it still foreboded evil. What was the cause of Mr. Osborne's dark looks? she asked. Had any difference arisen between him and her Papa? Her poor Papa returned so melancholy from the City, that all were alarmed about him at home—in fine, there were four pages of loves and fears and hopes and forebodings.

"Poor little Emmy—dear little Emmy. How fond she is of me," George said, as he perused the missive—"and, Gad, what a headache that mixed punch has given me!" Poor little Emmy, indeed.

CHAPTER XIV.

MISS CRAWLEY AT HOME.



BOUT this time there drove up to an exceedingly snug and well appointed house in Park Lane, a travelling chariot with a lozenge on the panels, a discontented female in a green veil and crimped curls on the rumble, and a large and confidential man on the box. It was the equipage of our friend Miss Crawley, returning from Hants. The windows of the carriage were shut: the fat spaniel, whose head and tongue ordinarily lolled out of one of them, reposed on the lap of the discontented female. When the vehicle stopped, a large round bundle of shawls was taken out of the carriage by the aid of various domestics and a young lady who accompanied the heap of cloaks. That bundle contained Miss Crawley, who was conveyed up-stairs forthwith, and put into a bed and chamber warmed properly as for the reception of an invalid. Messengers went off for her physician and medical man. They came, consulted, prescribed, vanished. The young companion of Miss Crawley, at the conclusion of their interview, came in to receive their instructions, and administered those antiphlogistic medicines which the eminent men ordered.

Captain Crawley of the Life Guards rode up from Knightsbridge Barracks the next day: his black charger pawed the straw before his invalid aunt's door. He was most affectionate in his inquiries regarding that amiable relative. There seemed to be much source of apprehension. He found Miss Crawley's maid (the discontented female) unusually sulky and despondent: he found Miss Briggs her dame de compagnie in tears alone in the drawing-room. She had hastened home, hearing of her beloved friend's illness. She wished to fly to her couch, that couch which she, Briggs, had so often smoothed in the hour of sickness. She was denied admission to Miss Crawley's apartment. A stranger was administering her medicines —a stranger from the country—an odious Miss . . . tears choked the utterance of the dame de compagnie, and she buried her crushed affections and her poor old red nose in her pocket handkerchief.

Rawdon Crawley sent up his name by the sulky femme de chambre, and Miss Crawley's new companion, coming tripping down from the sick-room, put a little hand into his as he stepped forward eagerly to meet her, gave a glance of great scorn at the bewildered Briggs, and, beckoning the young Guardsman out of the back drawing-room, led him down stairs into that now desolate dining-parlour, where so many a good dinner had been celebrated.

Here these two talked for ten minutes, discussing, no doubt, the symptoms of the old invalid above stairs; at the end of which period the parlour-bell was rung briskly, and answered on that instant by Mr. Bowls, Miss Crawley's large confidential butler (who, indeed, happened to be at the keyhole during the most part of the interview); and the Captain coming out, curling his moustachios, mounted the black charger pawing among the straw to the admiration of the little blackguard boys collected in the street. He looked in at the dining-room window, managing his horse, which curvetted and capered beautifully—for one instant the young person might be seen at the window, then her figure vanished, and, doubtless, she went-up stairs again to resume the affecting duties of benevolence.

Who could this young woman be, I wonder? That evening a little dinner for two persons was laid in the dining-room—when Mrs. Firkin, the lady's maid, pushed into her mistress's apartment, and bustled about there during the vacancy occasioned by the departure of the new nurse—and the latter and Miss Briggs sat down to the neat little meal.

Briggs was so much choked by emotion that she could hardly take a morsel of meat. The young person carved a fowl with the utmost delicacy, and asked so distinctly for egg-sauce, that poor Briggs, before whom that delicious condiment was placed, started, made a great clattering with the ladle, and once more fell back in the most gushing hysterical state.

"Had you not better give Miss Briggs a glass of wine?" said the person to Mr. Bowls, the large confidential man. He did so. Briggs seized it mechanically, gasped it down convulsively, moaned a little, and began to play with the chicken on her plate.

"I think we shall be able to help each other," said the person with great suavity: "and shall have no need of Mr. Bowls's kind services. Mr. Bowls, if you please, we will ring when we want you." He went down stairs, where, by the way, he vented the most horrid curses upon the unoffending footman, his subordinate.

"It is a pity you take on so, Miss Briggs," the young lady said, with a cool, slightly sarcastic, air.

"My dearest friend is so ill, and wo—o—o—on't see me," gurgled out Briggs in an agony of renewed grief.

"She's not very ill any more. Console yourself, dear Miss Briggs. She has only overeaten herself—that is all. She is greatly better. She will soon be quite restored again. She is weak from being cupped and from medical treatment, but she will rally immediately. Pray console yourself, and take a little more wine."

"But why, why won't she see me again?" Miss Briggs bleated out. "Oh, Matilda, Matilda, after three-and-twenty years' tenderness! is this the return to your poor, poor Arabella?"

"Don't cry too much, poor Arabella," the other said (with ever so little of a grin); "she only won't see you, because she says you don't nurse her as well as I do. It's no pleasure to me to sit up all night. I wish you might do it instead."

"Have I not tended that dear couch for years?" Arabella said, "and now—"

"Now she prefers somebody else. Well, sick people have these fancies, and must be humoured. When she 's well I shall go."

"Never, never," Arabella exclaimed, madly inhaling her salts-bottle.

"Never be well or never go? Miss Briggs," the other said, with the same provoking good nature. "Pooh—she will be well in a fortnight, when I shall go back to my little pupils at Queen's Crawley, and to their mother, who is a great deal more sick than our friend. You need not be jealous about me, my dear Miss Briggs. I am a poor little girl without any friends, or any harm in me. I don't want to supplant you in Miss Crawley's good graces. She will forget me a week after I am gone: and her affection for you has been the work of years. Give me a little wine if you please, my dear Miss Briggs, and let us be friends. I 'm sure I want friends."

The placable and soft-hearted Briggs speechlessly pushed out her hand at this appeal; but she felt the desertion most keenly for all that, and bitterly, bitterly moaned the fickleness of her Matilda. At the end of half an hour, the meal over, Miss Rebecca Sharp (for such, astonishing to state, is the name of her who has been described ingeniously as the person hitherto), went up-stairs again to her patient's rooms, from which, with the most engaging politeness, she eliminated poor Firkin. "Thank you, Mrs. Firkin, that will quite do; how nicely you make it! I will ring when anything is wanted." "Thank you;" and Firkin came down stairs in a tempest of jealousy, only the more dangerous because she was forced to confine it in her own bosom.

Could it be the tempest which, as she passed the landing of the first floor, blew open the drawing-room door? No; it was stealthily opened by the hand of Briggs. Briggs had been on the watch. Briggs too well heard the creaking Firkin descend the stairs, and the clink of the spoon and gruel-basin the neglected female carried.

"Well, Firkin?" says she, as the other entered the apartment. "Well, Jane?"

"Wuss and wuss, Miss B.," Fisher said, wagging her head.

"Is she not better then?"

"She never spoke but once, and I asked her if she felt a little more easy, and she told me to hold my stupid tongue. Oh, Miss B., I never thought to have seen *this* day!" And the water-works again began to play.

"What sort of a person is this Miss Sharp, Firkin? I little thought, while enjoying my Christmas revels in the elegant home of my firm friends, the Reverend Lionel Delamere and his amiable lady, to find a stranger had taken my place in the affections of my dearest, my still dearest Matilda!" Miss Briggs, it will be seen by her language, was of a literary and sentimental turn, and had once published a volume of poems—"Trills of the Nightingale"—by subscription.

"Miss B., they are all infatyated about that young woman," Firkin replied. "Sir Pitt wouldn't have let her go, but he daredn't refuse Miss Crawley anythink. Mrs. Bute at the Rectory jist as bad—never happy out of her sight. The Capting quite wild about her. Mr. Crawley mortial jealous. Since Miss C. was took ill, she won't have nobody near her but Miss Sharp, I can't tell for where nor for why; and I think somethink has bewidged everybody."

Rebecca passed that night in constant watching upon Miss Crawley; the next night the old lady slept so comfortably, that Rebecca had time for several hours' comfortable repose herself on the sofa, at the foot of her patroness's bed; very soon, Miss Crawley was so well that she sat up and laughed heartily at a perfect imitation of Miss Briggs and her grief, which Rebecca described to her. Briggs' weeping snuffle, and her manner of using the handkerchief, were so completely rendered, that Miss Crawley became quite cheerful, to the admiration of the doctors when they visited her, who usually found this worthy woman of the world, when the least sickness attacked her, under the most abject depression and terror of death.

Captain Crawley came every day, and received bulletins from Miss Rebecca respecting his aunt's health. This improved so rapidly, that poor Briggs was allowed to see her patroness; and persons with tender hearts may imagine the smothered emotions of that sentimental female, and the affecting nature of the interview.

Miss Crawley liked to have Briggs in a good deal soon. Rebecca used to mimic her to her face with the most admirable gravity, thereby rendering the imitation doubly picquante to her worthy patroness.

The causes which had led to the deplorable illness of Miss Crawley, and her departure from her brother's house in the country, were of such an unromantic nature that they are hardly fit to be explained in this genteel and sentimental novel. For how is it possible to hint of a delicate female, living in good society, that she ate and drank too much, and that a hot supper of lobsters profusely enjoyed at the Rectory was the reason of an indisposition which Miss Crawley herself persisted was solely attributable to the dampness of the weather? The attack was so sharp that Matilda—as his Reverence expressed it—was very nearly "off the hooks;" all the family was in a fever of expectation regarding the will, and Rawdon Crawley was making sure of at least forty thousand pounds before the commencement of the London season. Mr. Crawley sent over a choice parcel of tracts, to prepare her for the change from Vanity Fair and Park Lane for another world; but a good doctor from Southampton being called in in time, vanquished the lobster which was so nearly fatal to her, and gave her sufficient strength to enable her to return to London. The baronet did not disguise his exceeding mortification at the turn which affairs took.

While everybody was attending on Miss Crawley, and messengers every hour from the Rectory were carrying news of her health to the affectionate folks there, there was a lady in another part of the house, being exceedingly ill, of whom no one took any notice at all; and this was the lady of Crawley herself. The good doctor shook his head after seeing her; to which visit Sir Pitt consented, as it could be paid without a fee; and she was left fading away in her lonely chamber, with no more heed paid to her than to a weed in the park.

The young ladies, too, lost much of the inestimable benefit of their governess's instruction. So affectionate a nurse was Miss Sharp, that Miss Crawley would take her medicines from no other hand. Firkin had been deposed long before her mistress's departure from the country. That

faithful attendant found a gloomy consolation on returning to London, in seeing Miss Briggs suffer the same pangs of jealousy and undergo the same faithless treatment to which she herself had been subject.

Captain Rawdon got an extension of leave on his aunt's illness, and remained dutifully at home. He was always in her antichamber. (She lay sick in the state bed-room, into which you entered by the little blue saloon). His father was always meeting him there; or if he came down the corridor ever so quietly, his father's door was sure to open, and the hyæna face of the old gentleman to glare out. What was it set one to watch the other so? A generous rivalry, no doubt, as to which should be most attentive to the dear sufferer in the state bed-room. Rebecca used to come out and comfort both of them; or one or the other of them rather. Both of these worthy gentlemen were most anxious to have news of the invalid from her little confidential messenger.

At dinner—to which meal she descended for half an hour—she kept the peace between them: after which she disappeared for the night; when Rawdon would ride over to the depôt of the 150th at Mudbury, leaving his Papa to the society of Mr. Horrocks and his rum and water. She passed as weary a fortnight as ever mortal spent in Miss Crawley's sick room; but her little nerves seemed to be of iron, and she was quite unshaken by the duty and the tedium of the sick-chamber.

She never told until long afterwards how painful that duty was; how peevish a patient was the jovial old lady; how angry; how sleepless; in what horrors of death; during what long nights she lay moaning, and in almost delirious agonies respecting that future world which she quite ignored when she was in good health.—Picture to yourself, oh fair young reader, a worldly, selfish, graceless, thankless, religionless old woman, writhing in pain and fear, and without her wig. Picture her to yourself, and ere you be old, learn to love and pray!

Sharp watched this graceless bedside with indomitable patience. Nothing escaped her; and, like a prudent steward, she found a use for everything. She told many a good story about Miss Crawley's illness in after days,—stories which made the lady blush through her artificial carnations. During the illness she was never out of temper; always alert; she slept light, having a perfectly clear conscience; and could take that refreshment at almost any minute's warning. And so you saw few traces of fatigue in her appearance. Her face might be a trifle paler, and the circles round her eyes a little blacker than usual; but whenever she came out from the sick-room she was always smiling, fresh, and neat, and looked as trim in her little dressing-gown and cap, as in her smartest evening suit.

The Captain thought so, and raved about her in uncouth convulsions. The barbed shaft of love had penetrated his dull hide. Six weeks—appropinquity—opportunity—had victimised him completely. He made a confidante of his aunt at the Rectory, of all persons in the world. She rallied him about it; she had perceived his folly; she warned him; she finished by owning that little Sharp was the most clever, droll, odd, good-natured, simple, kindly creature in England. Rawdon must not trifle with her affections, though—dear Miss Crawley would never pardon him for that; for she, too, was quite overcome by the little governess, and loved Sharp

like a daughter. Rawdon must go away—go back to his regiment and naughty London, and not play with a poor artless girl's feelings.

Many and many a time this good-natured lady, compassionating the forlorn life-guardsman's condition, gave him an opportunity of seeing Miss Sharp at the Rectory, and of walking home with her, as we have seen. When men of a certain sort, ladies, are in love, though they see the hook and the string, and the whole apparatus with which they are to be taken, they gorge the bait nevertheless—they must come to it—they must swallow it—and are presently struck and landed gasping. Rawdon saw there was a manifest intention on Mrs. Bute's part to captivate him with Rebecca. He was not very wise; but he was a man about town, and had seen several seasons. A light dawned upon his dusky soul, as he thought, through a speech of Mrs. Bute's.

"Mark my words, Rawdon," she said. "You will have Miss Sharp one day for your relation."

"What relation,—my cousin, hey, Mrs. Bute? Francis sweet on her, hey?" inquired the waggish officer.

"More than that," Mrs. Bute said, with a flash from her black eyes.

"Not Pitt?—He sha'n't have her. The sneak a'n't worthy of her. He's booked to Lady Jane Sheepshanks."

"You men perceive nothing. You silly, blind creature—if anything happens to Lady Crawley, Miss Sharp will be your mother-in-law; and *that's* what will happen."

Rawdon Crawley, Esquire, gave vent to a prodigious whistle, in token of astonishment at this announcement. He couldn't deny it. His father's evident liking for Miss Sharp had not escaped him. He knew the old gentleman's character well; and a more unscrupulous old—whyou—he did not conclude the sentence, but walked home, curling his moustachios, and convinced he had found a clue to Mrs. Bute's mystery.

"By Jove, it's too bad," thought Rawdon, "too bad, by Jove! I do believe the woman wants the poor girl to be ruined, in order that she shouldn't come into the family as Lady Crawley."

When he saw Rebecca alone, he rallied her about his father's attachment in his graceful way. She flung up her head scornfully, looked him full in the face, and said,—

"Well, suppose he *is* fond of me. I know he is, and others too. You don't think I am afraid of him, Captain Crawley? You don't suppose I can't defend my own honour, said the little woman," looking as stately as a queen.

"O, ah, why—give you fair warning—look out, you know—that's all," said the moustachio-twiddler.

"You hint at something not honourable, then?" said she, flashing out.

"O—Gad—really—Miss Rebecca," the heavy dragoon interposed.

"Do you suppose I have no feeling of self-respect, because I am poor and friendless, and because rich people have none? Do you think, because I am a governess, I have not as much sense, and feeling, and good breeding as you gentle-folks in Hampshire? I'm a Montmorency. Do you suppose a Montmorency is not as good as a Crawley?"

When Miss Sharp was agitated, and alluded to her maternal relatives,

she spoke with ever so slight a foreign accent, which gave a great charm to her clear ringing voice. "No," she continued, kindling as she spoke to the Captain; "I can endure poverty, but not shame—neglect, but not insult; and insult from—from *you*."

Her feelings gave way, and she burst into tears.

"Hang it, Miss Sharp—Rebecca—by Jove—upon my soul, I wouldn't for a thousand pounds. Stop, Rebecca!"

She was gone. She drove out with Miss Crawley that day. It was before the latter's illness. At dinner she was unusually brilliant and lively; but she would take no notice of the hints, or the nods, or the clumsy expostulations of the humiliated, infatuated guardsman. Skirmishes of this sort passed perpetually during the little campaign—tedious to relate, and similar in result. The Crawley heavy cavalry was maddened by defeat, and routed every day.

If the baronet of Queen's Crawley had not had the fear of losing his sister's legacy before his eyes, he never would have permitted his dear girls to lose the educational blessings which their invaluable governess was conferring upon them. The old house at home seemed a desert without her, so useful and pleasant had Rebecca made herself there. Sir Pitt's letters were not copied and corrected; his books not made up; his household business and manifold schemes neglected, now that his little secretary was away. And it was easy to see how necessary such an amanuensis was to him, by the tenor and spelling of the numerous letters which he sent to her, entreating her and commanding her to return. Almost every day brought a frank from the baronet, enclosing the most urgent prayers to Becky for her return, or conveying pathetic statements to Miss Crawley, regarding the neglected state of his daughters' education; of which documents Miss Crawley took very little heed.

Miss Briggs was not formally dismissed, but her place as companion was a sinecure and a derision; and her company was the fat spaniel in the drawing-room, or occasionally the discontented Firkin in the housekeeper's closet. Nor, though the old lady would by no means hear of Rebecca's departure, was the latter regularly installed in office in Park Lane. Like many wealthy people, it was Miss Crawley's habit to accept as much service as she could get from her inferiors; and good-naturedly to take leave of them when she no longer found them useful. Gratitude amongst certain rich folks is scarcely natural or to be thought of. They take needy people's services as their due. Nor have you, O poor parasite and humble hanger-on, much reason to complain! Your friendship for Dives is about as sincere as the return which it usually gets. It is money you love, and not the man; and were Crœsus and his footman to change places, you know, you poor rogue, who would have the benefit of your allegiance.

And I am not sure, that, in spite of Rebecca's simplicity and activity, and gentleness and untiring good humour, the shrewd old London lady, upon whom these treasures of friendship were lavished, had not a lurking suspicion all the while of her affectionate nurse and friend. It must have often crossed Miss Crawley's mind that nobody does anything for nothing.

If she measured her own feeling towards the world, she must have been pretty well able to gauge those of the world towards herself; and perhaps she reflected, that it is the ordinary lot of people to have no friends if they themselves care for nobody.

Well, meanwhile Becky was the greatest comfort and convenience to her, and she gave her a couple of new gowns, and an old necklace and shawl, and shewed her friendship by abusing all her intimate acquaintances to her new confidante (than which there can't be a more touching proof of regard), and meditated vaguely some great future benefit—to marry her perhaps to Clump, the apothecary, or to settle her in some advantageous way of life; or, at any rate, to send her back to Queen's Crawley when she had done with her, and the full London season had begun.

When Miss Crawley was convalescent and descended to the drawing-room, Becky sang to her, and otherwise amused her; when she was well enough to drive out, Becky accompanied her. And amongst the drives which they took, whither, of all places in the world, did Miss Crawley's admirable good-nature and friendship actually induce her to penetrate, but to Russell Square, Bloomsbury, and the house of John Sedley, Esquire.

Ere that event, many notes had passed, as may be imagined, between the two dear friends. During the months of Rebecca's stay in Hampshire, the eternal friendship had (must it be owned?) suffered considerable diminution, and grown so decrepit and feeble with old age as to threaten demise altogether. The fact is, both girls had their own real affairs to think of: Rebecca her advance with her employers—Amelia her own absorbing topic. When the two girls met, and flew into each other's arms with that impetuosity which distinguishes the behaviour of young ladies towards each other, Rebecca performed her part of the embrace with the most perfect briskness and energy. Poor little Amelia blushed as she kissed her friend, and thought she had been guilty of something very like coldness towards her.

Their first interview was but a very short one. Amelia was just ready to go out for a walk. Miss Crawley was waiting in her carriage below, her people wondering at the locality in which they found themselves, and gazing upon honest Sambo, the black footman of Bloomsbury, as one of the queer natives of the place. But when Amelia came down with her kind smiling looks (Rebecca must introduce her to her friend, Miss Crawley was longing to see her, and was too ill to leave her carriage)—when, I say, Amelia came down, the Park Lane shoulder-knot aristocracy wondered more and more that such a thing could come out of Bloomsbury; and Miss Crawley was fairly captivated by the sweet blushing face of the young lady who came forward so timidly and so gracefully to pay her respects to the protector of her friend.

"What a complexion, my dear. What a sweet voice!" Miss Crawley said, as they drove away westward after the little interview. "My dear Sharp, your young friend is charming. Send for her to Park Lane, do you hear?" Miss Crawley had a good taste. She liked natural manners—a little timidity only set them off. She liked pretty faces near her; as she liked pretty pictures, and nice china. She talked of Amelia with

rapture half-a-dozen times that day. She mentioned her to Rawdon Crawley, who came dutifully to partake of his aunt's chicken that day.

Of course, on this Rebecca instantly stated, that Amelia was engaged to be married—to a Lieutenant Osborne—a very old flame.

"Is he a man in a line-regiment?" Captain Crawley asked, remembering after an effort, as became a guardsman, the number of the regiment, the—th.

Rebecca thought that was the regiment. "The Captain's name," she said, "was Captain Dobbin."

"A lanky, gawky fellow," said Crawley, "tumbles over everybody. I know him; and Osborne's a goodish-looking fellow, with large black whiskers?"

"Enormous," Miss Rebecca Sharp said, "and enormously proud of them, I assure you."

Captain Rawdon Crawley burst into a hoarse laugh by way of reply; and being pressed by the ladies to explain, did so when the explosion of hilarity was over. "He fancies he can play at billiards," said he. "I won two hundred of him at the Cocoa Tree. *He* play, the young flat! He'd have played for anything that day, but his friend Captain Dobbin carried him off, hang him!"

"Rawdon, Rawdon, don't be so wicked," Miss Crawley remarked, highly pleased.

"Why, ma'am, of all the young fellows I've seen out of the line, I think this fellow's the greenest. Tarquin and Deuceace get what money they like out of him. He'd go to the deuce to be seen with a Lord. He pays their dinners at Greenwich, and they invite the company."

"And very pretty company too, I dare say."

"Quite right, Miss Sharp. Right, as usual, Miss Sharp. Uncommon pretty company,—haw, haw!" and the Captain laughed more and more, thinking he had made a good joke.

"Rawdon, don't be naughty!" his aunt exclaimed.

"Well, his father's a city man—immensely rich, they say. Hang those city fellows, they must bleed; and I've not done with him yet, I can tell you. Haw, haw!"

"Fie, Captain Crawley, I shall warn Amelia. A gambling husband!"

"Horrid, ain't he, hey?" the Captain said with great solemnity; and then added, a sudden thought having struck him:—"Gad, I say, ma'am, we'll have him here."

"Is he a presentable sort of a person?" the aunt inquired.

"Presentable?—oh, very well. You wouldn't see any difference," Captain Crawley answered. "Do let's have him, when you begin to see a few people; and his whatdyecallem—his inamorato—eh, Miss Sharp; that's what you call it—comes. Gad, I'll write him a note, and have him; and I'll try if he can play picquet as well as billiards. Where does he live, Miss Sharp?"

Miss Sharp told Crawley the Lieutenant's town address; and a few days after this conversation, Lieutenant Osborne received a letter, in Captain Rawdon's school-boy hand, and enclosing a note of invitation from Miss Crawley.

Rebecca despatched also an invitation to her darling Amelia, who, you

may be sure, was ready enough to accept it when she heard that George was to be of the party. It was arranged that Amelia was to spend the morning with the ladies of Park Lane, where all were very kind to her. Rebecca patronised her with calm superiority: she was so much the cleverer of the two, and her friend so gentle and unassuming, that she always yielded when anybody chose to command, and so took Rebecca's orders with perfect meekness and good humour. Miss Crawley's graciousness was also remarkable. She continued her raptures about little Amelia, talked about her before her face as if she were a doll, or a servant, or a picture, and admired her with the most benevolent wonder possible. I admire that admiration which the genteel world sometimes extends to the commonalty. There is no more agreeable object in life than to see May Fair folks condescending. Miss Crawley's prodigious benevolence rather fatigued poor little Amelia, and I am not sure that of the three ladies in Park Lane she did not find honest Miss Briggs the most agreeable. She sympathised with Briggs as with all neglected or gentle people: she wasn't what you call a woman of spirit.

George came to dinner—a repast *en garçon* with Captain Crawley.

The great family coach of the Osbornes transported him to Park Lane from Russell Square; where the young ladies, who were not themselves invited, and professed the greatest indifference at that slight, nevertheless looked at Sir Pitt Crawley's name in the baronetage; and learned everything which that work had to teach about the Crawley family and their pedigree, and the Binkies, their relatives, &c., &c. Rawdon Crawley received George Osborne with great frankness and graciousness: praised his play at billiards: asked him when he would have his revenge: was interested about Osborne's regiment: and would have proposed picquet to him that very evening, but Miss Crawley absolutely forbade any gambling in her house; so that the young Lieutenant's purse was not lightened by his gallant patron, for that day at least. However, they made an engagement for the next, somewhere: to look at a horse that Crawley had to sell, and to try him in the Park; and to dine together, and to pass the evening with some jolly fellows. "That is, if you 're not on duty to that pretty Miss Sedley," Crawley said, with a knowing wink. "Monstrous nice girl, 'pon my honour, though, Osborne," he was good enough to add. "Lots of tin, I suppose, eh?"

Osborne wasn't on duty; he would join Crawley with pleasure: and the latter, when they met the next day, praised his new friend's horsemanship—as he might with perfect honesty—and introduced him to three or four young men of the first fashion, whose acquaintance immensely elated the simple young officer.

"How 's little Miss Sharp, by-the-bye," Osborne inquired of his friend over their wine, with a dandified air. "Good-natured little girl that. Does she suit you well at Queen's Crawley? Miss Sedley liked her a good deal last year."

Captain Crawley looked savagely at the Lieutenant out of his little blue eyes, and watched him when he went up to resume his acquaintance with the fair governess. Her conduct must have relieved Crawley if there was any jealousy in the bosom of that life-guardsman.

When the young men went up stairs, and after Osborne's introduction to

Miss Crawley, he walked up to Rebecca with a patronising, easy swagger. He was going to be kind to her and protect her. He would even shake hands with her, as a friend of Amelia's; and saying, "Ah, Miss Sharp! how-dy-doo?" held out his left hand towards her, expecting that she would be quite confounded at the honour.

Miss Sharp put out her right fore-finger—

And gave him a little nod, so cool and killing, that Rawdon Crawley, watching the operations from the other room, could hardly restrain his laughter as he saw the Lieutenant's entire discomfiture; the start he gave, the pause, and the perfect clumsiness with which he at length condescended to take the finger which was offered for his embrace.

"She 'd beat the devil, by Jove!" the Captain said, in a rapture; and the Lieutenant, by way of beginning the conversation, agreeably asked Rebecca how she liked her new place.

"My place?" said Miss Sharp, coolly, "how kind of you to remind me of it! It's a tolerably good place: the wages are pretty good—not so good as Miss Wirt's, I believe, with your sisters in Russell Square. How are those young ladies?—not that I ought to ask."

"Why not?" Mr. Osborne said, amazed.

"Why, they never condescended to speak to me, or to ask me into their house, whilst I was staying with Amelia; but we poor governesses, you know, are used to slights of this sort."

"My dear Miss Sharp!" Osborne ejaculated.

"At least in some families," Rebecca continued. "You can't think what a difference there is though. We are not so wealthy in Hampshire as you lucky folks of the city. But then I am in a gentleman's family—good old English stock. I suppose you know Sir Pitt's father refused a peerage. And you see how I am treated. I am pretty comfortable. Indeed, it is rather a good place. But how *very* good of you to inquire!"

Osborne was quite savage. The little Governess patronised him and *persiffléd* him until this young British Lion felt quite uneasy; nor could he muster sufficient presence of mind to find a pretext for backing out of this most delectable conversation.

"I thought you liked the City families pretty well," he said haughtily.

"Last year you mean, when I was fresh from that horrid vulgar school? Of course I did. Doesn't every girl like to come home for the holidays? And how was I to know any better? But oh, Mr. Osborne, what a difference eighteen months' experience makes!—eighteen months spent, pardon me for saying so, with gentlemen. As for dear Amelia, she, I grant you, is a pearl, and would be charming anywhere. There now, I see you are beginning to be in a good humour; but oh these queer odd City people! And Mr. Jos.—how is that wonderful Mr. Joseph?"

"It seems to me you didn't dislike that wonderful Mr. Joseph last year," Osborne said kindly.

"How severe of you! Well, *entre nous*, I didn't break my heart about him; yet if he had asked me to do what you mean by your looks (and very expressive and kind they are, too), I wouldn't have said no."

Mr. Osborne gave a look as much as to say, "Indeed, how very obliging!"

"What an honour to have had you for a brother-in-law, you are thinking? To be sister-in-law to George Osborne, Esquire, son of John Osborne, Esquire, son of—what was your grandpapa, Mr. Osborne? Well, don't be angry. You can't help your pedigree, and I quite agree with you that I would have married Mr. Joe Sedley; for could a poor penniless girl do better? Now you know the whole secret. *I'm* frank and open; and, considering all things, it was very kind of you to allude to the circumstance—very kind and polite. Amelia dear, Mr. Osborne and I were talking about your poor brother Joseph. How is he?"

Thus was George utterly routed. Not that Rebecca was in the right; but she had managed most successfully to put him in the wrong. And he now shamefully fled, feeling if he stayed another minute, that he would have been made to look foolish in the presence of Amelia.

Though Rebecca had had the better of him, George was above the meanness of tale-bearing or revenge upon a lady,—only he could not help cleverly confiding to Captain Crawley, next day, some notions of his regarding Miss Rebecca—that she was a sharp one, a dangerous one, a desperate flirt, &c.; in all of which opinions Crawley agreed laughingly, and with every one of which Miss Rebecca was made acquainted before twenty-four

hours were over. They added to her original regard for Mr. Osborne. Her woman's instinct had told her, that it was George who had interrupted the success of her first love-passage, and she esteemed him accordingly.

"I only just warn you," he said to Rawdon Crawley, with a knowing look—he had bought the horse, and lost some score of guineas after dinner, "I just warn you—I know women, and counsel you to be on the look-out."

"Thank you, my boy," said Crawley, with a look of peculiar gratitude. "You 're wide awake, I see." And George went off, thinking Crawley was quite right.

He told Amelia of what he had done, and how he had counselled Rawdon Crawley—a devilish good, straight-forward fellow—to be on his guard against that little sly, scheming Rebecca.

"Against *whom?*" Amelia cried.

"Your friend the Governess.—Don't look so astonished."

"O George, what *have* you done?" Amelia said. For her woman's eyes, which Love had made sharp-sighted, had in one instant discovered a secret which was invisible to Miss Crawley, to poor virgin Briggs, and, above all, to the stupid peepers of that young whiskered prig, Lieutenant Osborne.

For as Rebecca was shawling her in an upper apartment, where these two friends had an opportunity for a little of that secret talking and conspiring which forms the delight of female life, Amelia, coming up to Rebecca, and taking her two little hands in hers, said, "Rebecca, I see it all."

Rebecca kissed her.

And regarding this delightful secret, not one syllable more was said by either of the young women. But it was destined to come out before long.

Some short period after the above events, and Miss Rebecca Sharp still remaining at her patroness's house in Park Lane, one more hatchment might have been seen in Great Gaunt Street, figuring amongst the many which usually ornament that dismal quarter. It was over Sir Pitt Crawley's house; but it did not indicate the worthy baronet's demise. It was a feminine hatchment, and indeed a few years back had served as a funeral compliment to Sir Pitt's old mother, the late dowager lady Crawley. Its period of service over, the hatchment had come down from the front of the house, and lived in retirement somewhere in the back premises of Sir Pitt's mansion. It re-appeared now for poor Rose Dawson. Sir Pitt was a widower again. The arms quartered on the shield along with his own were not, to be sure, poor Rose's. She had no arms. But the cherubs painted on the scutcheon answered as well for her as for Sir Pitt's mother, and *Resurgam* was written under the coat, flanked by the Crawley Dove and Serpent. Arms and Hatchments, Resurgam.—Here is an opportunity for moralizing!

Mr. Crawley had tended that otherwise friendless bed-side. She went out of the world strengthened by such words and comfort as he could give her. For many years his was the only kindness she ever knew; the only friendship that solaced in any way that feeble, lonely soul. Her heart was dead long before her body. She had sold it to become Sir Pitt Crawley's wife. Mothers and daughters are making the same bargain every day in Vanity Fair.

When the demise took place, her husband was in London attending to some of his innumerable schemes, and busy with his endless lawyers. He had found time, nevertheless, to call often in Park Lane, and to despatch many notes to Rebecca, entreating her, enjoining her, commanding her to return to her young pupils in the country, who were now utterly without companionship during their mother's illness. But Miss Crawley would not hear of her departure; for though there was no lady of fashion in London who would desert her friends more complacently as soon as she was tired of their society, and though few tired of them sooner, yet as long as her *engoûment* lasted her attachment was prodigious, and she clung still with the greatest energy to Rebecca.

The news of Lady Crawley's death provoked no more grief or comment than might have been expected in Miss Crawley's family circle. "I suppose I must put off my party for the 3rd," Miss Crawley said; and added, after a pause, "I hope my brother will have the decency not to marry again." "What a confounded rage Pitt will be in if he does," Rawdon remarked, with his usual regard for his elder brother. Rebecca said nothing. She seemed by far the gravest and most impressed of the family. She left the room before Rawdon went away that day; but they met by chance below, as he was going away after taking leave, and had a parley together.

On the morrow, as Rebecca was gazing from the window, she startled Miss Crawley, who was placidly occupied with a French novel, by crying out in an alarmed tone, "Here 's Sir Pitt, Ma'am!" and the baronet's knock followed this announcement.

"My dear, I can't see him. I won't see him. Tell Bowls not at home, or go down stairs and say I'm too ill to receive any one. My nerves really won't bear my brother at this moment;" cried out Miss Crawley, and resumed the novel.

"She 's too ill to see you, Sir," Rebecca said, tripping down to Sir Pitt, who was preparing to ascend.

"So much the better," Sir Pitt answered. "I want to see *you*, Miss Becky. Come along a me into the parlour," and they entered that apartment together.

"I wawnt you back at Queen's Crawley, Miss," the baronet said, fixing his eyes upon her, and taking off his black gloves and his hat with its great crape hat-band. His eyes had such a strange look, and fixed upon her so stedfastly, that Rebecca Sharp began almost to tremble.

"I hope to come soon," she said in a low voice, "as soon as Miss Crawley is better—and return to—to the dear children."

"You 've said so these three months, Becky," replied Sir Pitt, "and still you go hanging on to my sister, who 'll fling you off like an old shoe, when she 's wore you out. I tell you I *want* you. I 'm going back to the Vuneral. Will you come back? Yes or no."

"I daren't—I don't think—it would be right—to be alone—with you, Sir," Becky said, seemingly in great agitation.

"I say agin, I want you," Sir Pitt said, thumping the table. "I can't git on without you. I didn't see what it was till you went away. The house all goes wrong. It 's not the same place. All my accounts

has got muddled agin. You *must* come back. Do come back. Dear Becky, do come."

"Come—as what, Sir?" Rebecca gasped out.

"Come as Lady Crawley, if you like," the baronet said, grasping his crape hat. "There! will that zatusfy you? Come back and be my wife. Your vit vort. Birth be hanged. You 're as good a lady as ever I see. You 've got more brains in your little vinger than any baronet's wife in the county. Will you come? Yes or no?"

"Oh, Sir Pitt!" Rebecca said, very much moved.

"Say yes, Becky," Sir Pitt continued. "I 'm an old man, but a good 'n. I 'm good for twenty years. I 'll make you happy, zee if I don't. You shall do what you like; spend what you like; and 'av it all your own way. I 'll make you a zettlement. I 'll do everything reglar. Look year!" and the old man fell down on his knees and leered at her like a satyr.

Rebecca started back a picture of consternation. In the course of this history we have never seen her lose her presence of mind; but she did now, and wept some of the most genuine tears that ever fell from her eyes.

"Oh, Sir Pitt!" she said. "Oh, Sir—I—I 'm *married already*."

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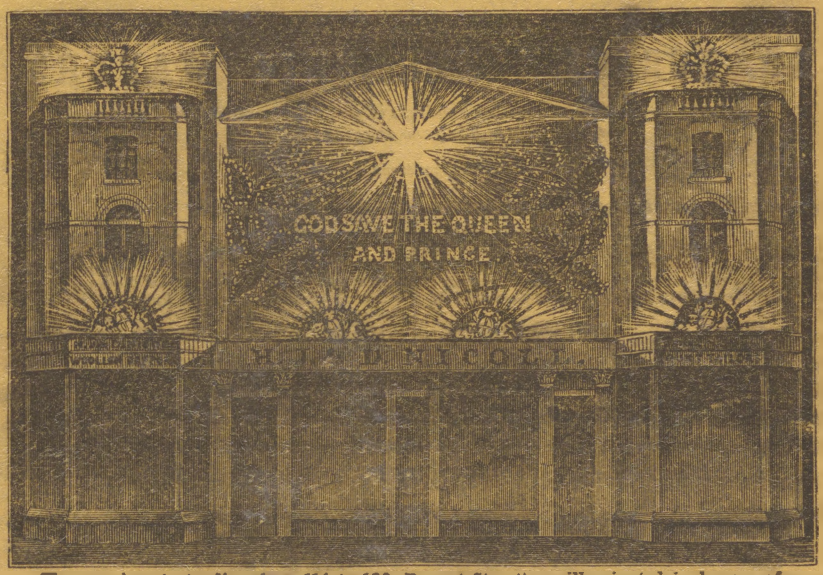

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